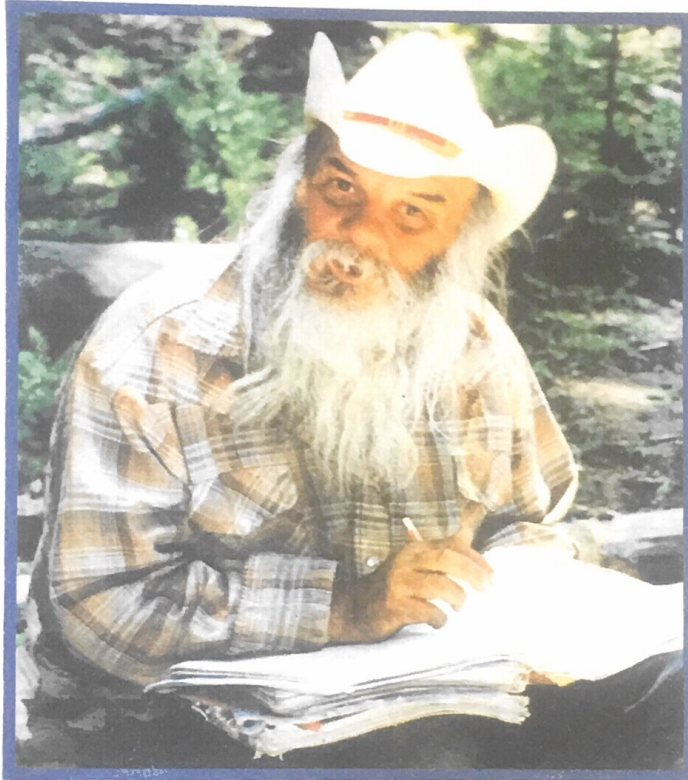




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.

Scanned in 2018.
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- 13.F STORY ON THE "RAINBOW HOUSE" from the
AUSTIN AMERICAN STATESMAN,
- MARCH 9, 1978
- with comments by JODEY and RICHARD

"The Rainbow House" - story in March 9, 1978
 Austin American-Statesman by Jim Berry

[With comments in brackets on the story by my Jodey Bateman. This story was written by one of a pair of reporters "disguised" as hippies who were staying at the Rainbow House the night of the shooting. I had been at the house before the shooting and I arrived again as the body was being carried out, so my comments are about exactly the same conditions Jim Berry witnessed.]

An Austin police officer tagged the Rainbow House at 3406 Guadalupe a "cess pool."

. Thirty to 40 people occupying a once-fashionable residence just a few blocks north of the main Drag. A two-story 10-room house gutted of furniture and replaced by rows of beds fashioned from two-by-fours raised three inches off the floor, lining the living and dining room walls.

. Of "rafter rats" who stake out a sleeping pad by placing a six-foot long sheet of plywood in the attic.

. Of an all-too-obvious lack of toilet facilities, from the appearance of the rooms and an almost overwhelming odor at the front door. [There were three toilets and two functioning bathtubs in the house. The bathtubs were in almost constant use while I was there. The floors were swept every morning. There was no "overwhelming odor."]

. Of the many occupants with "open and running" sores including several who looked no more than 14 to 16 years of age and a boy no more than eight years old. [I saw a couple of people with cuts, but certainly not "many occupants." The eight year old was with his mother.]

. Of an L-shaped garage at the rear of the house, used as living quarters by another 15 to 20 young men where they heaped rags on the floor to sleep on. And no sign of toilet facilities. [I didn't see "rags heaped on the floor" out there - just mattresses with old blankets on them. And there was a toilet.]

These conditions so shocked patrolman Ron Summers when he

made a disturbance call there the night of February 26 that he wrote a two-page report prompting investigations of health and fire hazards to the neighborhood.

Before the week was out, city building inspectors had their own probe going and cited numerous violations of the city building code.

The Building Standards Commission ordered a hearing held March 15 to consider reduction of the occupancy load or an order to vacate the premises.

Police officers... have suspected the commune-type dwelling was being used as a "safe house" for runaways, drug abusers and other street characters seeking refuge from the law.

Officers who have been to the house in recent weeks checking on reported runaways have been refused admission beyond the first floor...

"It's very difficult," Assistant Police Chief George Philbar says. "We can't just go through there shining a flashlight and shaking people down. We have to go by the law."

A resident of the area, who asked that her name and address not be singled out, said the whole neighborhood is up in arms over conditions at the Rainbow House.

"These people," she said, "are not like the old hippie movement. These are street people, not worth anything."

... City records show the building to be owned by construction executive Ben H. Powell of Houston, chairman of the board of the American National Bank of Austin.

Notification of the March 15 hearing was sent to Powell by certified letter this week, and to Richard Bailey, listed as "the renter"... authorities... reported.

[Richard's comment: "It's funny, there hasn't been anything in the paper as far as about what we're really doing." At the March 15 hearing, Richard was ordered to reduce the number of people in the house to 20, within 30 days. He looked upon this as a victory, since there was a petition campaign to board up the house immediately for razing.]

The April 13, 1978 Austin American Statesman had another story on the Rainbow House as follows:

The city Building Standards Commission deferred action Wednesday [April 12] on whether to shut down the Rainbow House... pending an eviction notice by the owner of the property.

At the same time, the commission by a vote of 7-1 extended a variance it granted at the last meeting requiring the residents of the house to reduce occupancy to no more than 20 overnight guests...

"You've done some good out there, but you got a ways to go," Commission chairman Bill Dorman told Rainbow House residents who had gathered at the hearing.

One of them... called back, "You'll always have overcrowding. Too many people are hungry and homeless."